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THEATRICAL AMUSEMENTS;

WITH

SOME REMARKS

ON THE

REV. HENRY W. BELLOWS' ADDRESS

BEFORE THE DRAMATIC FUND SOCIETY, N. Y.

BY

D. HAYES AGNEW, M.D.

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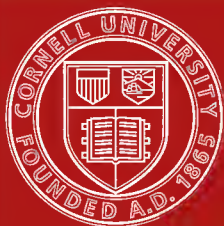


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BEFORE THE DRAMATIC FUND SOCIETY, N. Y.

The subject of human amusements is a grave moral question, and deserves a much more deliberate and serious consideration, than is usually accorded by the great mass of mankind. Even among men professing Christianity there appears a disposition too often to discover some undefined border line, where propriety ends, and sin begins. Those who approach the subject in this manner attempt a task very much like pointing out the lines of limitation in the blending of the rainbow's hues, besides leaving themselves open to the suspicion at least of striving to be loyal to both God and mammon. Amusements may be addressed to the senses or the intelligence; but, avoiding an analysis which is rather metaphysical than practical, let us consider the term in its common and most obvious acceptation. They are very various in their character, but may all be grouped into two classes, *lawful* and *unlawful*. The latter are as numerous as our carnal appetites and impure desires. The caption of our article, however, will show that we have selected but one from among the large number. Man's sphere in this world is one of obligation, and is embraced in his duty to God, himself, and neighbour. This is the threefold attitude which he occupies here below. The claims of his Maker are superior to all others, though the duties which this relation requires, are in no way inconsistent with, or very different from the other two; indeed, a more compact generalization might with perfect propriety adjust these under the former, as the declaration "Whether ye eat or drink, or *whatsoever* ye do, do all to the glory of God," implies that in discharging the obligations to *self*, and *neighbour* properly, we are rendering service to *God*. We hope in treating of this subject to be able to demonstrate that those who lend their countenance to theatrical exhibitions are not only indictable, but guilty, under each of the three heads of man's moral duty.

Proposition I.—Theatrical amusements originated in corruption and superstition.

In proof of this proposition, we must recur to the history of these exhibitions. We have no reason to believe that such had any existence antecedent to the memorable times of Greece. The Athenians, therefore, generally receive the credit or rather the discredit of having instituted such representations. Among the divinities worshipped by the ancients, was Bacchus. Great festivals were established in honour of this god; both, as we learn, in the city and in the country. When the vintage had been gathered in, especially if a bountiful crop had been realized, a scene of indescribable licentiousness commenced. Hymns in honour of this divinity were sung by groups of drunken persons gathered around obscene images. Others, mounted in carts, rode through the country, chanting their indecent songs, and attacking those whom they might meet, with gross and rude jests. While such was the conduct of the Bacchanalians, there succeeded those who, in poetic strains, celebrated the memory of Jupiter, Apollo, Diana, Venus, and a host of others; committing, at the same time, such disgraceful and wanton excesses as forbid mention. Venus was the goddess of harlots and adulterers; (designate her by what titles you

will, in order to make the mention of her name tolerable in polite society,) and these play-houses were frequently dedicated to the impure goddess. The Roman theatre, Tertullian informs us, was styled the *Temple of Venus*; and not improperly, as we may learn from a farther perusal of his narrative, in which he declares that all kinds of beastly impurities were committed. At the Pythian Games, those who took part in the amusements were required to accompany their performances by illustrations of the circumstances connected with the subjects which they proposed to represent. From this, probably, the suggestion of scenic additions in illustration of plays was drawn. About 536 years before the Christian era, two Atticans, Susarion and Thespis, formed an association of actors. The former represented comedy; the latter tragedy. The one made his exhibitions on a temporary stage; the other on a cart. These being moveable, were transported from place to place, and wherever their exhibitions were given, great crowds congregated, indulging in drunkenness and sensual debauchery. Homer was the great pattern, whether they attempted tragedy or pleasantry. The derivation of the word *comedy* is not positively determined. By some it is believed to come from the Greek word *Κομᾶζειν* (*Kumadzein*,) signifying "to play the wanton," or "lascivious;" by others, from *Comus* who was the god of wantonness in the Polytheism of the ancients: but, be this as it may, either root proves an impure and vile origin; nor can there be any doubt on this subject, when we investigate the matter a little farther. Æschylus, whom some consider to have first produced tragedy, instead of Thespis, who has already been named, made great advances in the art, such as the introduction of mute characters, and supplying those actors who were of diminutive stature, with artificial limbs of great length, in order to give them a fictitious importance, and covering the faces of those whose features were not agreeable with masks. Houses were likewise constructed with numerous appliances for his exhibitions. The spirits of the dead were evoked; furies, entwined with terrible snakes, howling spectres, together with cumbrous paraphernalia, were produced; so that children were said to have expired from terror, and females were thrown into convulsions. It was some time before comedy reached the city. Even in that corrupt age it was confined by its obscenity and grossness, to the rural districts; but finally, however, entered the town, where for a time it was tolerated. Even in the hands of Thespis, it was most corrupt and injurious to public and private good; and hence we find the wise and venerable Solon, as related in his life by Plutarch, condemning it in the most positive terms; and still later, after Aristophanes had slandered the wisest and most virtuous of the ancients, as Socrates and Alcibiades, we find the Lacedemonians banishing such from their territory. From Greece, these entertainments passed to Rome, and the circumstances attending their introduction argue equally strong for their impiety and wickedness there. It seems to have been on the occasion of some great plague which was devastating the city, and in order to appease the wrath of their imaginary gods, plays were decreed, persons to perform them having been brought from Tuscany. In the worship of most of their gods and goddesses, plays, interludes, &c., formed a large portion of the ritual. It was common for Generals to vow certain plays, if the gods would prove propitious in their campaigns. This, and a spirit of lust dictated, on the part of Romulus, the betrayal of the Sabine virgins to the unbridled passions of a brutal soldiery, as is well known to every classical reader. Another great occasion for the exhibition of such performances, was during the Roman Saturnalia, when seven days were consecrated to Saturn, and the goddess Vesta, a period in which, according to Ovid, Seneca, and Virgil, the whole community seem given over to wantonness, stage plays, dancing, and drunkenness. The expense lavished in the erection and adornment of theatres among the Romans, exceeded anything of the kind before or since. The stage was covered with gold, their capacity adequate to accommodate over 30,000 persons; water was conducted by pipes into every portion of these im-

mense buildings, saturated with fragrant liquids, and projected from jets of capillary dimensions, thus diffusing itself through the air in a fine spray, redolent with odours. That their administration was corrupt, we have abundance of evidence to satisfy the most skeptical. Tacitus declares, from his own experience, that they were the foulest schools of vice, and that it was on this account the Roman Senate found fault with Pompey for encouraging them, alleging them to be prolific sources of contamination and ruin to their youth. Heliogabalus, a man only equalled in his bestiality by Tamerlane, was accustomed to tempt his decrepit passions by witnessing on the stage the consummation of the foulest deeds. Sempronius Sophos gave to his wife, for attending the theatres, a writing of divorcement, and we learn the act was approved by the whole Roman Senate. In the constitution of Justinian, a similar offence was considered a good cause for divorce, as represented by Bulengerus, in his work descriptive of theatres.

Some idea may be obtained of the filthiness and obscenity of the Roman plays, especially of the Flavian interludes, by consulting the work of Cyprian, concerning theatrical representations.

The idolatrous tendency of such exhibitions, is seen in the object which Herod had in view, as asserted by Josephus, in having them erected in Jerusalem; namely, to entice the Jews into idolatry; and there is reason to believe his attempt was not altogether unsuccessful. If any other evidence of the corruption of the Roman theatre is required, we would select, from among many authors, the testimony of St. Augustine; who declares that the performances of such, were so filthy and wicked, that those who practised them were disfranchised, being considered unworthy the name of citizen, and as entering largely into those circumstances which conspired to sap the foundations of that once great and powerful people. About the time of, or very soon after the Conquest, theatrical plays were introduced into England. The evil proclivities of such were soon seen in the subjects which furnished matter of illustration; such as the representation of miracles, the deaths of martyrs, accompanied by all kinds of buffoonery and clownish extravagances. Emboldened by their success, they soon commenced the more daring and impious exhibitions of some of the most sacred scenes in Scripture history; among them even the sufferings and death of our Saviour; and this in a manner calculated to favour liberalism and infidelity. For authority on this subject, the reader is referred to Cibber's Apology. These outrages eventually brought out a petition to Richard II. in 1378, by certain church officials, to suppress what was deemed a great public evil. In those days, many of the pieces were written by kings' fools, and of course were embodiments of court morality. During the reign of Elizabeth, considerable efforts were made, with a view to elevate and reform these amusements; but so strong are the tendencies of the institution toward evil, that they could not be sustained.—From the time of James I. until near the end of the reign of Charles I., play-houses increased in numbers; but about 1643, events familiar to every historical reader, occurred, which placed a new face on both the political and religious institutions of England. The Puritan, who though perhaps not altogether blameless, was yet, in the main, correct, exchanged the place of servant for that of master. The vanities of this world found but little favour with these austere and rigid precisians. During the same time, William Prynne wrote his *Histrio-Mastix*, and the upshot of the matter was the entire suppression of play-houses, continuing so until the restoration of Charles II., 1660, when they were again opened, and, as related by Macaulay, vol. i. page 118, in his History of England, conducted in the most shameful manner. The vices were glorified, the virtues condemned, religion ridiculed, and profanity and debauchery of every kind committed. The Lord's day was even desecrated by such exhibitions, as though the devil designed to make up for lost time. The Spanish, and French productions, by no means unexceptionable, were popularized and prostituted. The masses read

nothing else, listened to nothing else, and while it is said Dryden could scarcely secure a reader or publisher, Southern and Shadwell could clear hundreds of pounds by their dramatic efforts. Drinking, smoking, card-playing, and gratification of lust, were the usual occupations before and after these performances. It was now that female characters were introduced upon the stage, such having been heretofore personified by youths dressed in woman's attire. Young girls were usually brought out, and repeated lines couched in vulgar and obscene language, designed to inflame the passions of the audience.

If any doubt still remains as to the immoral character of the stage, we may refer the skeptic to the acts of at least two English Parliaments, in which actors were, among other charges, styled *rogues*; as well as to the testimony of two reformed actors themselves.

We have not been able to ascertain exactly the period of the first introduction of plays into this country. It was probably before 1686, for we have allusions to its profanity and superstition by Mather, about that time. In 1749, however, they must have been in successful operation, for we learn that the General Court of Massachusetts passed an act for their suppression. In 1775, while the British were in possession of Boston, they had a play written termed "The Blockade of Boston," the object of which was apparently to ridicule the American militia, by whom they were blockaded; but really to keep up the spirits of their desponding soldiers. The experiment had rather a singular termination. In the midst of the play a soldier rushed upon the stage, in disordered dress, with great terror depicted on his face, and crying, "The Rebels! the Rebels have attacked the Neck!" The actors at once took to their heels, and left the house. The audience, thinking this to be a part of the play, did not discover their mistake until, finding they did not return, they concluded there might be some truth in the report, and made their exit quite as unceremoniously as the actors.

Such is the history of the origin of plays in Greece, Rome, India, England, and America; and with the facts presented in proof of the first proposition (hundreds of others being on record,) we feel justified in constructing the following syllogism. *That which originated in superstition and corruption, is wrong. But Theatres originated in superstition and corruption: therefore theatres are wrong.*

PROPOSITION II. *The character of stage exhibitions is calculated to demoralize the minds of spectators.*

The truth of this second assumption might be deduced from what has been presented in our previous remarks: but, not to rest here, let us argue this second proposition from two distinct considerations.

First,—Stage representations, and their manner of being represented. And *Second*,—Association.

First. Stage representations, and the manner in which they are represented. Scarcely is there one play in a hundred, at least one which meets with any degree of success, that has not some character corresponding to a *lover*, *rake*, or *libertine*. They abound in narratives of guilty amours, and adulterous acts. Often the plot is formed from some circumstance full of vice, murder, or drunkenness. All these require distinct personations; and to produce the desired effect, each must be faithfully imitated. The rake must spend, drink, game, offend propriety in a thousand ways, and indulge in various dissipations; the libertine plan and execute his hellish plots on confiding and unsuspecting innocence; the murderer, with a face cruel and relentless, swear vengeance, track, waylay, and plunge his steel into the bosom of some unsuspecting victim; and the drunkard reel, swagger, utter slang and profanity. Besides these, we have, in much of the acting, lascivious smiles, wanton glances, dubious compliments, indelicate attitudes, kissing, embracing, with a variety of other vain and sinful practices. We could enumerate many pieces of this type, which have met with popular favour, but presume the fact will not be denied.

Now no one at all conversant with human nature will pretend to maintain that such have not a contaminating influence on the mind. The passions are more powerful than the reason; the vices of our nature are much more easily cultivated and developed than our virtues; and it is only in the absence of all occasion and stimulus, and then with difficulty, that we are able to crucify these devils within us. Gosson, Northbrooke, Stubbs, and others, have furnished us with ample evidence of the effect of such scenes. Hence also the psalmist, who had quaffed many streams of pleasure, says—“*Turn away my eyes from beholding vanity;*” and the apostle, in Ephesians, (v. 4,) after condemning other vices, says—“*Neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient, but rather giving of thanks.*” In these exhibitions there is nothing real; all is feigned and counterfeit. This fact will explain why the Latins were in the habit of using the term *Hystriionica Hypocrisis* as a proverb. If they attempt the delineation of some virtue, it is robbed of significance and point by contact with the circumstance of illustration. If patriotism, it is made fulsome by ignoble language, without moral force, by enduring in a bad cause, and emasculated of its most influential worth by an exit with poison or steel. If happiness or glory, it is some Elysian idea, to be won by feats of Quixotic knight-errantry, full of poetry and romance, and cast in a mould the pattern of which no one ever saw. If the lover, there must be compliments profuse, attention assiduous, vows recorded, unrequited affection, life insupportable, moonlight scenes, rural cottages, splendid mansions, and parental jurisdiction nullified by well-planned elopements. If the failings or the triumphs of our common humanity be the theme of illustration, they are so elaborated as to impress erroneously the young and confiding mind, by creating, on the one hand, universal distrust, and on the other anticipations of an ideal bliss nowhere realized. If the conduct of David, when he feigned madness before Achish, be not justifiable, how is it possible to defend such hypocrisy? What we require in this day of stern reality and earnest activity, is *truth in the inward parts*; there is deception enough, in all conscience, in the world, without systematizing and popularizing it.

Another part of these entertainments are songs of dubious, if not positively impure sentiment, and dancing. The language is such, frequently, as no lady would tolerate in private society; and to be twirled, and handled, as these dances require, is by no means conducive to purity of feeling. Those who have excelled in this performance and secured the largest houses, have been those who most effectually outraged propriety and decency by great personal exposure. Now, all such trifling and vicious employments tend to effeminate men, and degrade women. Cyrus is said to have completely enervated the rebellious Lydians, at the suggestion of Croesus, by teaching them music and dancing. The apostle James, in his general Epistle, (v. 13,) directs those who may be in a cheerful mood to sing compositions imbued with spiritual sentiments:—“*Is any merry, let him sing psalms.*” Whenever we hear persons indulging in corrupt discourse, whether publicly or privately, we may conclude with Seneca, that the heart is corrupt also; the stream partakes of the nature of the fountain. “*Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.*” The clothing of female characters is likewise indecent, exposing the person, and arranged, it would seem, with a scrupulous eye to the pollution of the minds of spectators; the very sight of which ought to make any properly constituted female blush for her sex. Such attire has ever been a trick of the play house, and the most powerful weapon of the harlot. It is particularly spoken against by Tertullian, Dr. Reynolds, and others, and positively condemned by Paul in 1 Timothy ii. 9:—“*In like manner also that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness, sobriety,*” &c. Aside from all this, the presence of females on the boards of a theatre is out of place from other considerations. If the apostle of the Gentiles, (1 Tim. ii. 9—12,) suffered not a woman to teach, and considered it a shame for them

to speak in the church, by what rules of propriety or expediency do they assume to appear as the exponents of refined taste, and act in the temple of Thespis? The reputation of woman is a plant tender as the apple of the eye. Retiring modesty and an undisguised sensitiveness of nature is her charm and glory; and how dare she meet the vulgar gaze of gaping spectators, the coarse laugh and boisterous plaudits of pit and dome, and mingle with the vilest libertines who disgrace God's footstool? Again; there is in almost all plays the irreverent use of God's names, titles, and attributes; the ascription of Divine prerogatives to heathen idols; and quotations of Scripture texts, of all places most inappropriate on the stage, and in the mouths of play actors. Such practices commit great violence upon the better impulses of the heart, blunting those feelings of reverence and awe which the name of our Maker should always produce, and are in direct violation of the third commandment—the name of God being employed uselessly, and therefore, in the language of that precept of the decalogue, *in vain*.

The *second* consideration in support of our proposition, is *theatrical associations*. The moment an individual enters within the walls of such a building he is thrown into the midst of a promiscuous assembly, a crowd made up of all characters. He sees there the gay and thoughtless pleasure-seeker, who lives all the while on an ocean of excitement. He hears their light, frivolous, and often profane conversation, without the power to reprove or correct; for who would feel at home to reprove vice in a play house? Dagon sits a king here. Now I do not wish to countenance the idea that we are obliged to buckle on armour and run a tilt at every thing which savours of error, in all places, and under all circumstances; but I do contend that to voluntarily associate with a company where there is every reason to know improper conversation will be used, does wrong in two ways. You are so situated as to feel that reproof would be out of place, or, if attempted, perhaps get you into trouble; and, on the other hand, your presence and silence are construed into acquiescence and approval; a stumbling-block, therefore, in the way of your brother. We should think, then, that if men were like Lot, whose righteous soul was vexed from day to day at what he was compelled to see and hear, they would assiduously flee from the confines of this Sodom. If the evil was only of a negative character, the duty to avoid it is positive, for the Scriptures command us to *shun even the appearance of evil*. These places are also the resort of lewd women. Their object is to attract attention, and therefore they make themselves as conspicuous as possible. Their presence there is to stir up the devil which men carry about in their bosoms, and by their wanton arts to entrap and snare the young. It is here, too, that their guilty appointments are made, and from here hundreds "go as the ox goeth to the slaughter." Multitudes date their journey to ruin from the night they first entered the play house. It has been my lot, from the circumstances in which my profession has placed me, to learn the griefs of many hearts, and to hear the recriminating confessions of many whose constitutions have been shattered by disease and dissipation. Among these revelations of remorse, the theatre has come in for a fair share of the blame. It is in truth the house of the harlot; it is here she holds her court; and if, as Solomon says, her house is the way to hell, it is a singular lodging-place for travellers on their way to heaven. Those who attend such resorts, however moral and discreet they may be; however they may make covenant with their eyes and their ears, must, some time or other, witness the improper conduct of these unfortunate creatures. The eyes and ears are highways beset with traitors. One glance at Bathsheba made David a murderer. One act of wantonness, one unchaste word, may pollute the heart; and it must be remembered that God sits in judgment on the thoughts, as well as the acts. To complete this mechanism of Satan for the ruin of soul and body, we have appended the drinking saloon, to fire the passions, unsettle resolution, and madden the brain.

How is it possible now for Christian men, professing a religion which re-

quires the reverent use of their Master's name, the eschewing of all evil and corrupt conversation, and absence from all places where they cannot ask God's blessing—how is it possible for them to countenance such a system of unmitigated iniquity? It cannot be but that, by contact with such exhibitions, the strongest safeguards of virtue and morality must be weakened, if not utterly swept away. These facts, confirmatory of the second proposition, will justify our second syllogism, *Whatever is calculated to demoralize the mind is wrong, and should not be encouraged. But stage exhibitions tend to demoralize the mind; therefore, stage exhibitions are wrong, and should not be encouraged.*

PROPOSITION III.—*The general character of actors is bad.*

Such seems always to have been the case, from the earliest records to the present time. Among the Lacedemonians and Romans, such was their infamy, that laws were enacted for their banishment, not content alone with their suppression. The Romans were particularly careful of their youth, and proud of their citizenship; and it was the desire to protect the one from enervating influences, and the other from stain and slander, that dictated this rigid enactment. Salvian, one of the ancient fathers, declared that to speak to, or even to see an actor, was sinful. They must have been terribly debased to justify so strange an expression. Nicholas Cabajila concludes, after stating their excesses, that nothing worse than a play actor could be made. The encouragement and support which they received from the rabble, even in their most obscene representations, had emboldened them to the commission of such wickedness that we are informed by Tacitus they were exiled from Italy during the reign of Tiberius. The nature of their offending is more explicitly stated by Marcus Aurelius; rapes and murders being placed among the crimes of which they were guilty. Their reputation for evil was so notorious, that the citizens of Marcelles, for fear of their youth, would not allow them to enter their city,—a remarkable contrast, in this case, between Pagans and Christians. The ancients entertained wise notions on this subject. It is the youth of the land whom we must take care of. All the institutions of our country are to be placed in their hands,—the church, the state, literature, arts, and science. What a momentous trust! They will impress their character upon each, for either weal or wo; for, in reality, the institutions of a country are nothing more or less than tangible transcripts and palpable portraits of the moral and intellectual constitution of a people.

We have other evidence as to the bad character of actors, in the fact of their being disqualified from giving evidence in courts of law, and incapacitated by their calling from becoming *citizens*, or holding public office. Women were excommunicated from the church by marrying such. In adducing these illustrations we are not to be understood as justifying them in all cases, but merely present them as proofs of our general proposition. Tiberius and Augustus Cæsar punished them with the lash for prosecuting so ignoble a calling. Tertullian describes them as being altogether destitute of shame. Philip Augustus, king of France, was so impressed by a conviction of their worthlessness and corruption, as to banish all players from his realm. Heliogabalus, one of the most infamous of names, whom we have mentioned in another connexion, established public brothels in Rome at one time, and supplied them regularly from the theatre; and, we doubt not, the same could be done to-day. In England, actors were at one time, by Parliamentary acts, styled *rogues*, and condemned to the whipping post. And, in a book designated as the "Blast of Retreat from Stage Playes," written by one who had been an actor himself on the English stage, revelations are made which show their character had not much improved at that day. When we come to inquire how they stand in public estimation at the present time, we find little to redeem them from the old reputation. It is needless to mention names; indeed, it would be obviously improper to do so, (though, if required, they can be forthcoming;) but is not the general sense of the community against their morality? Are they not pro-

verbial for their improvidence, intemperance, idleness, and lewd manner of life? Is there one out of a hundred, even of those who frequent such places, and belong to what they call good society, who would consider actors fit associates, or introduce them into their families? And what a stir does it make in a household when a daughter happens to elope with an actor, or a son marry an actress? What else, indeed, could be expected in the career of those whose whole lives are spent in administering to the pruriency of sense, and witnessing, both before and behind the curtain, transactions which deaden virtuous sensibility, and outrage common decency?

To conclude the testimony on this part of our subject, we have the acknowledgment of those who claim to be Christian men, and yet advocate the theatre, as to the immoral character of actors and actresses, and the life which they lead, most perilous to purity of feeling.*

From the preceding remarks, may we not form our third syllogism—*Any profession, the influence of which is uniformly bad upon its members, is wrong. But the influence of the theatrical profession is bad; therefore, the theatre is wrong.*

PROPOSITION IV. *Theatrical amusements violate every commandment in the decalogue.*

The first commandment is, *Thou shalt have no other gods before me.*

The second commandment is, *Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them, &c.*

We have placed the first and second in one category, as many of our observations, in illustration of the position assumed, will apply to both.

In the earlier history of this institution in Greece and Rome, it was emphatically the temple of the gods, for the very plays were prepared and performed in honour of these, many instances of which have been adduced under our first proposition, and need not therefore be repeated. Does idolatry only consist in a polytheistical belief, or in carving an image of wood, or stone, and bending before these the knee of supplication? God is the Searcher of the heart, and in its dark chambers may be often found altars to unknown gods. Our Master demands the entire heart. Whatever has a tendency to displace him, is *having other gods*. The idea is, not that we must think of nothing else but God and godly things, but that in *all* we do a spirit of Christianity should exert a controlling and governing influence. The theatre is fascinating in the extreme, and just because it panders to the evil propensities of our nature, is of all things most effectual in dissipating grave and serious thoughts, unloosing restraint, and quickening the lusts. It gives a distaste for the more sober and rational enjoyments, and puts more of the *world* than of *God* in the heart, which is the true spirit of idolatry. Its teachings are directly in opposition to the instruction of 1 John ii. 15, 16—"Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him; for all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world." We are required by the Divine law, not only to abstain from any course of conduct which may tend to dethrone the proper Sovereign of the heart; but, to keep our skirts clear, we must, in so far as our influence and example can go, prevent a similar result on the part of others.

The third commandment is, *Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain.*

This precept condemns the irreverent and unnecessary use of God's names, titles, &c. Look over any of the productions which pass current upon the stage, and the grossest violations will be discovered, the name of the Almighty

* Address by Rev. Henry W. Bellows, New York.

interlarding many parts of the plot, as well as quotations from the holy Scriptures in various connexions. Oaths, likewise, are not sparingly interspersed, and are generally emphasized by the speakers, so as to give point and saliency to wickedness itself. Then we have those infernal appendages, (theatrical saloons,) where all ages and sexes meet and mingle, during the progress, as well as in the intervals of the performance; and, inflamed by intoxicating drinks, utter the most scurrilous and profane language. In fact, this is one of the most common sources of complaint. Whenever the name of God, his titles, or attributes, are used in improper places, or on improper occasions, they are used in vain, and therefore violations of the third precept of the moral law. It is this want of reverence and solemnity in using the name of the Almighty, in the theatre as well as other places, which has materially contributed to swell the ocean of profanity now sweeping over the land. At every corner of the streets the ear is shocked, and the heart pained by terrible oaths.

The *fourth commandment* requires us to "remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy."

In some parts, even of our own country, the Lord's day is publicly desecrated by theatrical plays, public sentiment not being sufficiently influential to create a law for their suppression; and in Philadelphia, certainly among the most moral of American cities, play actors rehearse their parts, and members of the orchestra practise their pieces, at their homes, or lodgings, on the Sabbath; and, if report be correct, occasionally, in a private way, at the theatre itself. This disregard for a day set apart by Divine sanction for the communion of man with his Maker, is the legitimate outworkings of theatrical association. Under the most favourable circumstances, it is a difficult task to shut out the world and all distracting thoughts from the mind, and cultivate that feeling of holy contemplation and solemn thought which becometh the exercises of the Sabbath; and when we prosecute our occupations or amusements, at such times and in such places, six days of the week, as to virtually secularize the first, we are guilty of a breach of the fourth commandment. Theatrical amusements, kept up to a late hour on Saturday night, are eminently qualified to favour the plans of the devil upon the soul. The Almighty is robbed of several hours by the prolonged Sabbath morning nap, probably the whole day, by a headache or general indisposition from a variety of unlawful indulgences; or, if the church is reached, the scenes of the play house are constantly stealing over the mind, perplexing the thoughts, breaking in upon every train of devotional feeling, and utterly confounding the worship of the soul. An individual who is thus made the sport of contending and opposing emotions, cannot presume to *worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness*. Psalm xxix. 2.

The Fifth Commandment is, *Honour thy father and thy mother*.—There is not in all the world a more prolific source of parental dishonour than the play house. It is here especially where great numbers of youths congregate every evening, leaving many aching hearts at home. Often, too, under the plea of attending some library or other association, deception is thus practised on the unsuspecting minds of parents. At the theatre, every thing admirably conspires to take hold of the young and ardent mind,—light, scenery, dress, fashion, music, dancing, and then the intoxicating drinks, and the wiles of the harlot. These are the instrumentalities of mental contamination. Allow the young to visit such haunts one or two evenings, and the result is an entire distaste for the quiet and pure enjoyments of home. All those innocent and rational domestic amusements, which strengthen family affection, and cultivate virtuous sentiments, become tame and insipid. And when frequent absence begins to cast a shade of anxiety over the face, and fearful doubts to move the heart of a fond father or tender mother, requiring the interposition of parental discipline, then comes the first outbreak of filial insubordination, passing, probably, from one grade of criminality to another, until finally arrested by the iron hand of civil law, the gray hairs of broken-hearted parents are brought in sorrow to the grave.

The inefficiency of home government is one of the lamentable evils of the day. The effects of a mistaken leniency, and unlimited liberty of indulgence, are seen, not only in the defiant attitude and audacious conceit of boys, in the ordinary social relations of life, but also when, having attained years of greater maturity, they are brought in contact with the state. The very Pagans will rise up in judgment against this generation. Xenophon says the Persians were so careful of their youth as not to allow them to behold any amorous sights, or hear impure words spoken. Aristotle, in discoursing on the management of youth, speaks earnestly and truly, when he urges the importance of guarding their tender minds from everything which may foster sensuality. Let any one take his stand near one of these houses of infamy, and witness the crowds of boys who congregate about the doors or seek admission. Think ye these are here with their parents' consent? or will they become more obedient, industrious, and affectionate sons and daughters by their present association? Can there be a doubt but that the influence of the theatre over such a mass of impressible material is directly opposed to both the letter and spirit of the fifth commandment?

The Sixth Commandment declares, *Thou shalt not kill*.—He is a faithless interpreter of the Divine law who only sees the violation of this precept in the actual murder of a human being. It must be remembered that whatever weakens the power of moral restraint, and breaks down the safeguards of society, by developing a spirit of insubordination and recklessness, is justly chargeable, in the eye of God, with the guilt of all the crimes growing therefrom, of which murder is not infrequent. If we consult the oracles of history, there is no lack of evidence as to theatrical tendencies in this direction. The banishment of Tragedians by Plato, was on the ground of such exhibitions having so frequently produced a spirit of cruelty, quarrel, and sedition. Seneca and Plutarch testify to the same facts. It was the seditious, murders and contention engendered by stage plays which induced Tiberius to banish all actors from Italy. A similar act was decreed by Marcus Aurelius, driving them from Rome for the tumult and bloodshed which they occasioned. The fierce and destructive wars which were waged between the Romans and Sabines grew out of a theatrical rape. The bloodiest and most cruel tyrants who ever cursed the earth, such as a Nero, or a Caligula, were especially delighted with stage amusements. It has not been long since the partisans of two rival actors in New York disgraced the city by riot and bloodshed; and scarcely a season passes over Philadelphia, in which quarrels and bloodshed do not occur within the walls of her play houses. Nor are there any places requiring so imperatively the presence of a police force, to keep in subjection the leaven of riot and discord which make up so considerable a portion of the audience.

Thou shalt not commit adultery.—Comment on this subject is scarcely necessary; for if there is one thing more than another flowing out of theatrical attendance, as the legitimate effect of the whole system, it is sin under this head. Satan could not arrange a more complete programme to seduce the souls of men into actual and mental whoredom: everything is perfectly adapted to the animal nature,—the impure expressions with which plays often abound, gestures, attitudes, embracings, flirtations between male and female performers, dancing, and the habit of nudism, which forms so prominent a feature in the performances. Judging from the gross exposure of the person, the desideratum seems to be the attainment of the least possible dress, short of complete nakedness. Women who dance upon the stage, would seem particularly anxious to assume this indecent attire; and how persons claiming to be even moral in their deportment, can endure to witness the evolutions of a French *danseuse* gyrating and vaulting, as though the powers of attraction and repulsion had made her the subject of a personal strife, is to us the most irreconcilable of problems.

These performances are most admirable fuel to kindle into activity those lusts which render men an easy prey to the temptations of the harlot. *It is*

not vain in such cases to spread the net in the sight of the bird; as the enchantress spreads a veil even over the sense of vision. The Westminster Confession of Faith, which imbodyes the doctrinal views of a very large family of Christians, enumerates theatrical plays as among those things condemned by this commandment; nor do we deviate from the truth in asserting that every night out of the six, in which play houses are open, there are many who go from their doors to the consummation of guilty appointments formed within their walls. There is also, as we learn from Matthew v. 28, an interpretation, which, in the pure spirituality of the New Testament dispensation, reveals a much more comprehensive and searching significance to this precept of the moral law than many are willing to admit, "*But I say unto you, whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her, hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.*" There are many in the world who satisfy themselves with the attainments of the Scribes and Pharisees; content as long as no external improprieties are committed, never dreaming that legal conformity, to be acceptable in the sight of the great Searcher of hearts, must emanate from internal purity, and is then the external manifestation of Christ formed within us.

Thou shalt not steal.—Theatrical amusements are a frequent cause of theft. Especially is this the case with boys and young men, who always make up a fair proportion of the play-house audience, finding as they do there that which administers to perverted and depraved tastes. So strong does the appetite for this species of excitement become, that it must be gratified at all hazards; and when funds fail, they cannot resist the temptation to abstract from their employers' till, the means requisite to gain admission.

The ninth and tenth commandments condemn *false witness-bearing, and covetousness.*

Although dramatic entertainments may not directly violate these, yet the habits which they tend to encourage, the lessons which they teach, and the vices which they foster, induce such a constitution of mind as to weaken the obligation for their obedience, and thus contribute indirectly to such a result. Certain it is, however, that the testimony of those who are habitual patrons of the theatre would not be considered as inaccessible to mercenary considerations in a court of justice as many others; and those who would rob their employers' drawer, would have little compunction in coveting their neighbours' substance. In fact, it is difficult to imagine a breach of the eighth commandment without a previous violation of the tenth, as they stand in the relation of antecedent and consequent.

Are we not justifiable, therefore, in asserting, *That whatever violates and weakens the precepts of the moral law is wrong.*

But, theatrical amusements violate and weaken the precepts of the moral law: therefore, theatrical amusements are wrong.

PROPOSITION V.—*The mass of eminent Pagan and Christian authority is against stage plays.* Socrates, persuaded of their evil tendencies, induced the Athenians and Grecians to abandon them. As these authorities, however, are very numerous, we shall merely mention them, without quoting the voluminous testimony which they offer on this subject. They are Isocrates, the orator; Plato; Aristotle; Gorgias, recorded by Plutarch; Cicero; Seneca, the very best of heathen writers on morals; Aulus Gellius; Pliny, the great naturalist; Aurelianus; Marcus Aurelius Antoninus; Athenæus; Diodorus Siculus; Dionysius Hallicarnassus; Crispus Sallustius; Titus Livius; Cornelius Tacitus; Quintilian, who attributed the decay of eloquence and the idleness of youth, in his day, to plays; Plutarch; Emilius Probus, who informs us that the respectable part of the Roman people never approved of plays; Suetonius; Diogenes Laertius, who is very positive in their condemnation; Ælianus; Dion Cassius, who alludes to an argument used by Cæsar to encourage his soldiers against Antony, that his indulgence in plays had rendered him effeminate; he also condemns Caligula severely for patronising actors; Justin, who

asserts that such indulgences ruined the prowess of the Athenians, and vanquished Rome, as much as the Goth and Vandal; Herodianus; Julius Capitolinus; Trebellius Pollio; Aelius; Horace; Juvenal; Propertius; Paternulus; Taurus; Ovid; Marco. All of these, with others who might be quoted, comprising philosophers, poets, legislators, and historians, agree in their condemnation of stage amusements. In addition to these, we may enumerate the authority of certain states, nations, magistrates, emperors, and princes. They are the Lacedemonians, Athenians, Grecians, Romans, Germans, Goths, Vandals; the entire Jewish nation, before and since Christ; all the primitive Christians, Waldenses, Albigenses, and the French Protestants. Of *Magistrates*, Lycurgus, Solon, Plato, Socrates, Themistocles, Augustus Cæsar, Tiberius, Trajan, Marcus Aurelius, and even Nero, together with the whole Roman Senate; the cities of Geneva, Tigre, Basil, and England in various Parliamentary acts; Constantine, Theodosius, Leo, Justinian, Valentinian, Gratian, Theodoricus, Philip Augustus, King of France; Queen Elizabeth, Charles IX., Henry III. of France, Charles I. of England. So also we have the testimony to the same effect of very many Christians, both Protestants and Catholics;—Wilhelmus Malmesburiensis; Alexander Alensis, a learned English schoolman; Edmund Cantuariensis; Matthew Parisiensis; Thomas Aquinas; Cardinal Bonaventura; Suidas; Ricardus, de Media Villa; Pelagius; Wallis; Thomas Bradwardian; Holkot; Wickliffe; John de Burgo; Alexander Fabritius; Thomas Waldenses; Ricardus Pampolitanus; Nicolaus de Clemangis; Antonius, Archbishop of Florence; Pope Pius II.; Joannis Antonius, Bishop of Champagne; Lochmair; Wankel; Alexander of Alexandria; Ludovicus Vives; Agrippa; Peter Martyr; Calvin; Stalbridge; Thomas Beacon; Quinger; Lepsius; Lorentius Bocheilus; Cardinal Baronius, the Roman historian; Thomas Zerula, Bishop of Bonaventura; Paul Windecke; Francis de Croy, a London author, 1603; Henry Sporidanus; Philip Gluvenus (Germany, 1616;) George Amessius; Dr. Thos. Beard, 1631, in his work entitled "The Theatre of the Gods;" John Northbrooke; Gosson, a reformed player, 1578, in a work entitled "School of Abuses;" Dr. John Reynolds;—all of the preceding condemning in the most positive terms the exhibition of plays. To these, again, we may add a list of Christian fathers, and distinguished writers, from the time of Christ, for twelve hundred years;—Philo Judæus, a learned Jew; Clemens Romanus, 70 years after Christ, and therefore in the time of the Apostles; Josephus, A. D. 90; Athenagoras, a Christian philosopher, A. D. 150; Theophilus Antiochenus, Patriarch of Antioch; Clemens Alexandrinus; Hypolitus, the Martyr, A. D. 220; Origen; Minutius Felix, a celebrated Christian lawyer; St. Cyprian, Bishop of Carthage; Eusebius, Bishop of Cæsarea; Julius Firmicus; Hillary, Bishop of Poitiers; Macrarius Egyptus; Asterius; St. Ambrose; Basil; Gregory Nazianzen; Aurelius Prudentius, a Christian poet; Gaudentius; Epiphanius, Bishop of Constans; St. Chrysostom, Bishop of Constantinople; St. Augustine, Bishop of Hippo; Paulus Orosius, a Spanish Presbyter; Cyril, Bishop of Alexandria; Theodoret, Bishop of Cyprus; Prosper Aquitanicus, Bishop of Rhegium; Primasius, Bishop of Utica; Pope Leo I.; Salvian of France; Fulgentius, Bishop of Ruspeus, Africa; Pope Gregory I.; Valerian, Bishop of Cemela; Achuvinus, Instructor to Charles the Great; Haymo, Bishop of Halberstat; Remigius, Bishop of Rheims; Bruno, Bishop of Herapolis; Anselm, Archbishop of Canterbury; Petrus Blesensis, Archdeacon of Bath; Pope Innocent III. There are on record fifty-four ancient and modern National and Provincial Councils and Synods of the Eastern and Western Churches, all condemnatory of plays, extending from A. D. 305, until 1571. Of these we shall only select the following:—The first a Council in Spain, 305, called the "Concilium Eliberinum." There were 19 Bishops present. Three separate Canons, 57, 62, and 67, were framed on this subject, forbidding persons to loan their clothes to actors, denying church membership to either actors or frequenters of play-houses, and preventing

Christians marrying such. *Another Council held at Narbo*, under Constantine the Great, A. D. 314; present 600 Bishops; Canon 5th excommunicates stage players. *Concilium Arelatense*, A. D. 326: present 38 Bishops, 50 Elders and Deacons; Canon 20th excommunicates such. *Concilium Laodiceum*, in Phrygia, A. D. 364; almost all the Bishops of Asia present; Canons 53 and 54, against plays and indiscriminate dancing. *Concilium Carthaginese*, in Africa, A. D. 397; present 44 Bishops, St. Augustine being one of the number; Canon 11th against either exhibiting or witnessing plays. Another Carthaginian Council was convened A. D. 401; 214 Bishops present; Canons 86 and 88 imbody similar sentiments on the same subject. *Concilium Africanum*, A. D. 408; present 238 Bishops; Canons 12 and 27 against plays. *Concilium Toletanum*, in Spain, A. D. 617; present 72 Bishops; Canon 23 condemns plays. *Concilium Antisiodorensis*, in France; present 45 Bishops and Presbyters; Canon 59 against plays. *Sixth Council of Constantinople*, A. D. 680; present 289 Bishops; Canon 24 condemns stage amusements. *Synodus Francica*, A. D. 742. *Synodus Nicæna*, A. D. 785, present 350 Bishops. *Synodus Turonensis*, under Charles the Great, A. D. 813; Canon 7th. *Concilium Lateraniensis*, under Innocent III., A. D. 1215; present 2 Patriarchs, 70 Archbishops, 412 Bishops, and 800 abbots and priors; Canons 15 and 16 against plays. *Concilium Toletanum*, A. D. 1473. *Concilium Coloniensis*, A. D. 1536. *Synodus Augustensis*, A. D. 1549; Canon 19. *Concilium Tridentinum*, A. D. 1563; Canon 12. *Synodus Rothomagi*, A. D. 1581. *Concilium Tholosanum*, A. D. 1590. The *National Protestant Synod at Rochelle*, in 1571, composed of all the Protestants of France; all of which Councils and Synods condemn in strong language all such exhibitions, as demoralizing in the extreme. Still later, we find a Resolution condemning theatrical attendance by the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, convened May 27th, 1757. In the year 1750, the General Court of Massachusetts passed an act against all such exhibitions. In Section 6th of the old Book of Discipline of the Associate Presbyterian Church, will be found the views of that body strongly expressed in opposition to the diversions of the stage. On the Congressional Journal of October, 1778, we have recorded the following Resolution:—"Resolved, That any person holding an office under the United States, who shall act, promote, encourage, or attend such plays, (alluding to the theatre,) shall be deemed unworthy to hold such office, and shall be accordingly dismissed." In 1793, we find the Legislature of Pennsylvania was petitioned for an Act against theatres, accompanied by an address which was framed and signed by the following ministers of various denominations, well known as distinguished men in Philadelphia. They are as follows:—Robert Annan, John Dickins, Thomas Fleeson, Ashbel Green, Freeborn Garrettson, Henry Helmuth, William Marshall, John Meder, Joseph Pilmore, William Rodgers, William Smith, Frederick Schmidt, John B. Smith, Joseph Turner, Thomas Ustick, William White. At the meeting of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in 1818, a deliverance was made, in which that body declares an attendance on plays to be inconsistent with modesty and virtue, and calculated to weaken their strongest safeguards. Even Voltaire says that the language of the English comedy is the language of debauchery, not politeness. Lord Kaimes declares the writers of comedy ought to be odious for speaking such infection before the community.

The opinion of many other distinguished individuals to the same effect might be cited; but I will content myself by quoting the words of Judge Bulstrode, as I find them in the Presbyterian Magazine for July, 1857:—"One play house," says he, "ruins more souls than fifty churches can save." There are in the United States between four and five millions of Christians belonging to Evangelical denominations, who in their standards agree with great unanimity in condemning all such exhibitions.

Here, then, is an amount of respectable testimony amply sufficient to com-

mand the respect of the most skeptical, and with it we assert—*That which is condemned by so many Pagan and Christian writers, Councils, Synods, and Assemblies, must be wrong.*

But, *Stage plays are condemned by Pagan and Christian writers, Councils, Synods, and Assemblies.*

Therefore, *Stage plays are wrong.*

Having now, under five several propositions, endeavoured to show the evil of these institutions, we may notice some of those arguments usually employed in their defence.

First. It is alleged that the gross and objectionable feature of the performances have been removed, and that the drama is not what it once was.

This is no doubt in many instances correct, but is really no argument in their behalf. In fact, this apparent reform, which is supposed by some to disarm the theatre of much of its evil, only enhances the danger. The principle of demoralization is still there, and, although robed in a less repulsive dress, its power to do harm is not diminished. Poison is only the more dangerous by being combined with such agents as will cover its taste. The most fatal of diseases are frequently so masked by other conditions as sometimes to elude the most searching inquiry. The very vulgarity and coarseness of the earlier plays carried with them a certain amount of corrective influence, by disgusting the more cultivated minds of the audience. There are no plays, however, which are altogether free from objection; whenever they become so, the theatre will cease to exist; for if the appliances, such as dress, dancing, drinking saloons, and prostitute women, be removed, it would die to-morrow. This clearly shows the character of those who are its supporters. Those who have ever been the greatest play favourites were men of loose principles. The best piece which Johnson ever wrote, (his *Irene*,) proved a failure, and for no other reason except its being of a good moral tone.

Second. The theatre cultivates correct taste, refines, and elevates the manners. It is difficult to imagine on what grounds such an assumption is based, if it be maintained in sincerity. From the earliest time to the present, it has been regarded as among the most influential means of corrupting the manners, and depraving the taste. Instead of refining, it encourages boldness, profanity, and immodesty. The elocution of the stage is peculiar, and affected, entirely unsuited to any other profession: the high, lofty sentiments of morality, and scathing rebukes of vice which its patrons inform us are delivered, are as powerless for good as they are injudicious. Every one knows the acting is all hypocrisy, and if it excites any emotion whatever, it is from the thought, "how well the devil preaches against sin!" Unless there is a heart sincerity in the utterances of men, with a life corresponding to the doctrines which they teach, all their efforts to either instruct or improve, will be powerless. Let a minister of the gospel happen to swerve from the path of rectitude, or in an evil hour fall into temptation, and though he speak to men with the fervency and eloquence of a Paul, he will harden rather than convince. Alas, poor Colton! who has not read of Colton, the author of *Lacon*—a preacher of rare genius, profound learning, and burning eloquence; one who could flay a vice or ennoble a virtue as no other man; and yet Colton was powerless, for the evils which he condemned he practised.

Third. The inclination for amusement is so strong and irrepressible, that unless you have such places as the theatre, persons will run into worse excesses. This makes the play-house a safety valve, to save explosions in other directions; a kind of depository to receive the uneasy, restless, and turbulent streams of society. It asserts a principle, which, if admitted, would be subversive of the foundations of correct morality; viz.: "doing evil that good may come," or "of two evils choose the least." If there are wicked men in the world, it is no reason why houses should be erected and fitted up to intensify their sinful habits. The same reasoning would defend tippling houses, and houses of ill-fame, as public conservators.

We must abstain from *all* evil. If a place is not fit for good men, it is not fit for evil ones. The Divine Legislator has not framed two codes of law. When the Apostle says; (Rom. xii. 9,) "abhor that which is evil," he speaks to *every* man: when he says (Rom. xii. 2,) "and be not conformed to this world," he addresses himself to all classes and conditions of men. The death of Christ secured the most precious of all blessings to fallen man; yet such results will not in the least diminish the guilt of those who nailed him to the cross.

Fourth. The Theatre is no more responsible for the improprieties committed by its patrons, than the church for the occasional excesses of its members.

The cases are not parallel. There is a broad distinction to be drawn between what is the legitimate tendency of an institution, and what is only accidental. Disorder and vice are the natural results of play-house amusements. Assassination, intrigue, cruelty, and deception, are among the common subjects of representation; while drinking and lasciviousness reign within. "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he reap." The movements of the heavenly bodies are not more certainly the result of established laws in the universe of God, than vice and demoralization are the effects of theatrical association. The instructions of the church, on the contrary, are diametrically in opposition to evil of every kind. Peace, temperance, godliness, brotherly kindness, love, and mortification of lust—these are the lessons which it teaches; and we have yet to learn that such virtues can be productive of harm. .

In closing this article we feel constrained to make a brief reference to a pamphlet, which has recently appeared, entitled "The Relation of Public Amusements to Public Morality, especially of the Theatre, to the Highest Interests of Humanity." This address was delivered before the American Dramatic Fund Society, at the Academy of Music, New York, by the Rev. Henry W. Bellows, D. D., a Unitarian clergyman. Coming from one professing to be a preacher of righteousness, and assuming the championship of a calling and institution which has been condemned by the wise and virtuous of every nation and time, we had expected to find thunderbolts forged by no ordinary Vulcan. After a careful perusal, we have come to the conclusion, that Dr. Bellows' address is a very *windy* article, and as dishonouring to genuine piety as his sect is to the name of Christ. We might safely leave this production without comment to the good sense of all conscientious readers, for a verdict of condemnation. On page fourth, he uses the following language:—

"I begin, then, with asserting that there is nothing essentially wrong in the stage, or in the player's vocation." There are two ways in which the right, or the wrong of this assumption may be determined: *experience*, and the *will of God*. In reference to the first, under the first proposition of our article we have conclusively shown the theatre to be wrong in its very inception; that it has, in every nation where it existed, called down the interposition of legislative authority for its suppression; that its influence has been uniformly bad upon actors and patrons, begetting idleness, improvidence, extravagance, and mental pollution. God's will on the subject we learn from the spirit of revelation, as the theatre caters to those principles of human nature which it expressly condemns; as worldly-mindedness, lust, immodesty, intemperance, and slothfulness. But it may be urged, as is done on page 24, that these are only the fruit of theatrical abuse, and improper management; the institution itself not being answerable for such: yet I would reply, that if, after a trial of two thousand years, an institution, in spite of everything, continues to exert evil effects, its proclivities always tending to the side of vice, the inference is obvious as to its being essentially wrong. Granting, however, all which our Reverend author affirms, yet there are many things which are not wrong *per se* which nevertheless become so, and demand condemnation, from resulting circumstances. It is not wrong to manufacture many chemical articles or commercial products, but if the gaseous emanations contaminate the surrounding air, and endanger the health of a neighbourhood,

they then constitute evil and are indictable offences. Thus Paul (1 Cor. iii. 13,) declares, "Wherefore, if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world stands;" and this is in strict conformity with the great principles which underlie all properly constituted communities—"the yielding of personal predilections for the general good."

On the same page (4) our author says, "It is with the defence of amusements as a *principle* that the defence of the stage must begin. If to forget care, duty, death, the future, for any hour of the day; if fun, frolic, laughter, jests, &c., &c., have no legitimate times, &c., &c., then it is useless to talk of defending the most amusing of amusements." The principle, we learn a few sentences on, is predicated on the assumption of amusements being indispensable to the health of *body* and *mind*, and the *development of religion*. In this statement there is what logicians would term an *ignoratio elenchi*. The fact of such necessities existing in the human constitution by no means asserts the theatre and many other popular entertainments to be the ones best adapted to produce such desirable results. The facts of the case prove the correctness of this observation. Are the men of sound bodies, cultivated minds, and irreproachable religious character, theatre goers? Who are they who carry about with them the latent and active germs of physical disease, superficial, light, and impracticable intellects, and immoral habits? Who fill our Alms-houses, Hospitals, Magdalen, and Insane Asylums? Are they not those who have drunk most deeply at those very springs to which Dr. Bellows points for the healing of the nations? This is a very different result from what is so gratuitously asserted on page 7 of the same address, viz.: "Now Insane Asylums, and Hospitals shelter the victims furnished for their cells by the headlong sobriety and mad earnestness of business which knows no pleasure, or of conscience and piety which frown on amusement." Now, I challenge a fair expose on this point. Go, consult the statistics and the records furnished by these institutions, and see how many are there from being too industrious, too sober, and too pious. A very large proportion will be found to be inmates from causes just the reverse. This assertion, like a great many others of the Doctor's, exhibits either great ignorance on subjects perfectly familiar to every intelligent reader, or a very criminal attempt to impose a false statement upon the community. But our author is afraid we shall think too much of death, and the future. Is such likely to be the case? Is it not a matter of common observation that men live as though they never expected to die, and with a perfect indifference to the future? It would neither weaken the body, injure the mind, or violate religion, if men in this world, where the scenes of life are so constantly shifting, (Dr. Bellows' opinions to the contrary notwithstanding,) would think of death and futurity much more frequently than they do. We have no security that each hour may not be the last, and, think ye, should the message come, when the man, anxious to forget *death* for an *hour*, was indulging in the *fun, frolic, and laughter* of the play house, would he be likely to hear the Master's voice, saying, "Blessed is that servant, whom his Lord, when he cometh, shall find so doing?" Matthew xxv. 46. It is a remarkable fact that the popular amusements of the world have always been such as not to command the sanction of the good; and their influence undoubtedly is unfavourable to a pure Christian life. Paul never fought with beasts at Ephesus to improve the *health* of his *body* or *mind*, and stimulate his *piety*, after the light from heaven shone in upon his soul; and so we frequently see the first evidence of the work of Divine grace in the heart manifesting itself by men voluntarily leaving off an attendance upon what the world calls amusements. Does the sedate, sober-minded "Friend," the cut of whose coat, and umbrageous beaver, administer a withering rebuke to the vanities of this world, or the staid, and exemplary Presbyterian, whose gravity some erroneously interpret for heartless austerity; do these very numerous and very useful citizens, either in the outward appearance, or inward life, appear to require the aid of Dr. Bellows' panacea, (the theatre,) to give tone to

their muscles, activity to their minds, or efficiency to their piety? That there is, in the organization of man, the evidence of capacities fitting him for amusement, we by no means deny, and that these may be harmlessly indulged, we also admit. His senses are so many avenues for the transmission and reception of instructive and pleasurable sensations. The eye takes in the landscape with delight; the ear is moved with the harmony of sound; the smell regaled with the odoriferous incense which comes up from the great conservatory of nature; and the taste gratified with the good things of this life, and had our race maintained its original perfection, as it came from the hand of God, these senses would have conspired uninterruptedly to our happiness and enjoyment. But man is a fallen creature, the divine image has been lost, and temptation reaches the mind by the same channels as our pleasures. And when the woman *saw* that the tree was *good for food*, and that it was pleasant to the *eyes*, she took of the fruit thereof and did eat, Genesis iii. 6. We should remember, then, that because we have eyes, ears, tongues, &c., it is no reason why we should look, listen, and taste at everything. There are a great many ways in which the demanded recreation may be obtained, without such risk; and much more rational than those which are offered by the theatre. There is the Gymnasium, to train the muscles; the tree to prune; the vine to train; the walks to construct, with their curves and their angles; the book of travel or biography, penned in an easy pleasant style; music, to elevate, compose, and calm; the brush, the pallet, and the easel, the panorama, and the lecture. Certainly, these are not uninteresting sources of enjoyment. These combine the elements of true amusement,—*instruction with pleasurable emotion*. Such, however, is not our author's idea, as we learn from page 17, where he says, "Amusement loses its quality when instruction becomes its object;" thus debasing it into mere animal feeling: indulgence in "frolic, fun, and laughter, and forgetfulness of death and the future for an hour,"—such is the saturnalia which the reverend gentleman recommends, and which he might have imbodyed in the Epicurean sentiment, "Eat, drink, and be merry, for to-morrow we die." On page 11, we find the following sentence: "It is a terrible fact that the first hundred years of Puritanism in New England were marked alike by ascetic public manners, and the prevalence of vices almost unheard of in our free, and more indulgent society; and it is even now asserted that the soberest of our sister states contributes more than any other state in the union to the sad catalogue of female frailty." Is it to be supposed that the over-strictness of a people whose experience in life was peculiar, who had suffered much from bigotry, intolerance, and a horrible corruption of manners; a people who had undergone voluntary expatriation, and welcomed famine, forest, and barbarian cruelty, for God and conscience, is it to be supposed that a play house, or a New England stew (for that is the real import of the sentiment) would have secured for them a fairer position on the page of history, than they now occupy? The idea is downright, sheer nonsense. Nor is it correct that those unnatural vices which are hinted at by our author, are comparatively rare in our present indulgent society. In the city of New York, with all its appliances for carrying out Dr. Bellows' Utopian scheme, and I suppose in every great city, these very excesses (excluding of course their views on witchcraft,) exist in a tenfold degree. As for the lamentable amount of female frailty in the soberest of our sister states, it is a sad commentary on the power of his peculiar sect for influencing public morals, as I believe it is the only state in which Unitarianism forms a dominant organization; and so too of the theatre as an elevating agency when graduated to the standard required by its champion; for we learn, page 39, from testimony too of a *Christian* gentleman, that the principal theatre in Boston is free from reproach. "That must be a stupid nature (says the Dr. on page 14,) that does not powerfully feel the attractiveness of the stage, when occupied by such persons as Garrick, Talma, and the Kembles." If I mistake not, one of the Kembles has written an article ut-

terly repudiating the institution, as vicious and unfavourable to good morals; and her opportunities for knowing its peculiar merits one would suppose were quite ample.

On pages 26 and 27, the Dr. professes to be "unable to see why the theatre should be a vicious and depraved amusement, because it attracts the vicious and depraved of society. Have the vicious and depraved no human and universal tastes left?" The interrogatory forms a very narrow ground for the inference. It reminds one of despair catching at straws. "Where the carcass is, there will the eagles be gathered together." The cause of their presence there is in the fact, that the theatre administers to the vices which they practise, and it is here where their criminal appointments are made. If it be not motives of this kind which attract them to such places, why is it they disappear so rapidly when such reform is attempted as the gentleman describes on page 39, where, speaking of Niblo's Garden, he uses the following language: "That disgusting, and odious gallery, once allotted to vice, has been almost entirely abandoned?" Again, says he, on the same page: "For my own part, I believe the theatre has, in every age, exhibited the vices and follies of society, rather than created them." Either horn of the dilemma is bad enough, but the theatre is chargeable with holding to both; for it is notorious that in acting the vices it has created them. There are thousands whose first evil conception, or impure thought, flashed in upon their soul, when witnessing the studied illustration of some career of wickedness, or the delineation of some cunning artifice for the fall of woman. A knowledge of such facts suggested the abolishment of public executions; indeed it constitutes a most cogent objection to the play house.

On page 28, we find another specimen of very remarkable deduction:—"That the theatre has survived the usage it has received from the pulpit and the moralist, exhibits, at least, its wonderful vitality; and when we perceive that general censure and discouragement have not the slightest effect in putting it down, or improving it, why do we not begin to inquire what might be done by treating it with candour and sympathy, to save its uses, and correct its abuses?" True, it has existed a long time, and survived the censure and condemnation of the Christian world, but why should this suggest the propriety of treating it with sympathy? *Sin* has been in the world longer than the theatre, and withstood the artillery of a greater opposition; but who dreams of the church or the moralist suspending hostilities, and offering terms of compromise, because of its persisting vitality? The devil will have a party in the world until the general conflagration, and one of the great functions of the church is to bear testimony against him, and his institutions. We observe on page 30, the following expression:—"But I think the weakness of the church as an institution, mainly due in our day to its neglect to claim the world as its charge." Again, on page 32, "But if there is a great gulf fixed between the church and the world, as between heaven and hell, minister of Christ as I am, I would sooner take my place and part with the world than with the church, &c." If by the term *world* the Doctor means aliens to grace, "publicans and sinners," as he expresses it in another place, (page 31) and considers it proper for Christians to mingle with them in their popular amusements, then we say he places himself in open hostility to the gospel which he professes to preach: Rom. xii. 2, "And be ye not conformed to this world;" John ii. 15, "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him;" and in another passage the hatred of the world is specified as one of the marks of a Christian. If Christ mingled with publicans and sinners, when upon earth, it was not to participate in their practices, but to preach the truths of the everlasting gospel; and if Dr. Bellows chooses to visit the eight theatres of New York city, and preach Christ and him crucified, calling on men to repent, we shall say, God speed! If, on the other hand, our author, by the expression on page 30, asserts that the church is doing little for the world, he has perpetrated a gross slander on the evan-

gelical denominations of the United States, either knowingly or ignorantly; which we will not pretend to say, though we would rather charitably infer the latter, than reasonably assert the former. For his information, I would subjoin a few facts which I have been enabled to glean from a report by Robert Baird, on the state and prospects of religion in America, made at the conference of the Evangelical Alliance in Paris. The increase of population in the United States from 1800 till 1850, (half a century) was nearly four-fold and a-half, while in the same period the Evangelical Churches, ministers, and members, had increased more than nine-fold. There are over 38,183 churches, furnishing accommodations for 14,270,139 persons, or room for one-half the entire population of the United States. There are 35,000 servants of God, preaching the gospel to the *world*; and there have been gathered into these Christian garners 3,410,000 communicants from the *world*. In the beginning of this present century, with the exception of the Moravians, scarcely anything had been done in the cause of missions. There are now engaged in the home field 3,335 labourers, sustained by Christian contributions to the amount of \$72,859. In the foreign field there are over 500 ordained ministers, and 800 assistants, sustained at a cost of \$800,000. And where are these self-sacrificing men and women? They are in China, India, Africa, Persia, Turkey, Europe, America, and the islands of the sea. And what are the fruits of all this? 340 churches, 53,000 members, 30,000 pupils, besides schools, seminaries, presses, and important contributions to general science. But this is not all; we find the church wielding other agencies in behalf of the *world*. The American Bible Society, since its organization in 1816, has printed for circulation 10,653,647 copies of the Old and New Testaments. The American and Foreign Bible Society has published 550,000 copies since its foundation, which, with the Philadelphia Bible Society, makes an aggregate in all of 11,000,000 copies of the Holy Scriptures for the *world*. The American Tract Society published in 1855—volumes, 961,363; tracts, 10,091,214. And taking the different boards of publication we have, as the result of their labours, about 26,559,215 publications, with over 1300 Colporteurs and Missionaries, engaged in spreading this seed over the great field of the *world*. In addition to these we have different Educational Associations, protected and supported by the wings of the church, by whose munificence 2,000 pious young men are qualifying themselves to serve the *world* at a cost of \$250,000. Protestant churches are contributing largely to support and endow colleges, academies, and seminaries, at least 145 in number, and who shall pretend to compute the influence of any one of the 145 upon the *world*? The Church, too, has done much to introduce civilization and Christianity among the unfortunate aborigines of this country, demonstrating, by the 10,000 members which she has won, and the gentle arts of peace which prevail to a considerable extent among many tribes, the perfect feasibility of all which was contemplated by an Elliot, a Brainerd, or Zeisberger. Nor has Africa been forgotten in the universal humanity of the church. A Christian minister revolved in his capacious intellect the glorious conception of a Liberian Colony, and there it stands this day, no unsolved problem, no doubtful experiment, but a fixed and living fact, the success of which enterprise has no parallel in ancient or modern times, and which will, in the hands of Providence, as a great mission centre, invite Ethiopia to stretch forth her hands to God. And who is it that by great labour, patience, and research, have rendered the gospel of truth into at least one hundred-and-fifty different tongues? Who are they who train the thousands of infant minds in the Sabbath-school? Who go out into the dark and pestilential lanes of our populous cities, gathering up the otherwise uncared for children, and teaching them that they have a soul to save, and a body to care for? And who are they that open the purse to asylums for the insane, the deaf, dumb, blind, idiotic, and last, but not least important, for unfortunate erring woman, made often to fall by the influence of Dr. Bellows' favourite child, "the theatre?" Ah! is the

church doing nothing for the *world*? is it so powerless for good as our author would have us believe? If, after what has been presented, he persists in his determination to go over to the world, to place himself on the anti-church side of the gulf, he will, probably, nevertheless, be in a position to be benefited and reclaimed by some of the many *self-assumed saints* (spoken of on page 32) who go up and down to seek out the outcasts of Israel.

On page 38, we are furnished with the ingredients of a prescription which is to purge away all the evil humours of the play-house, among which are designated "improper characters." But why banish such? Have "the vicious and depraved no human and universal tastes?" Are not "the hours in which they are amused the most innocent of their life?" (Page 27.) "Do not the wicked and the careless like what the good and the careful also like—namely, amusement? Does the mere presence of the vicious and depraved prove the theatre to be vicious and depraved?" "I suppose them to be attracted by precisely what would attract me." (Page 26.) Consistency, Doctor—your reasoning proves too much. No, no,—take away the drinking saloon, purify the performances, exclude frail women, and your pet institute dies, beyond the power of resurrection. It is with the *quid est*, not the *quid oportet*, that conscientious and Christian men have to do. A reformed theatre is a mere chimera of Dr. Bellows' brain; it has been tried and failed. You might as well attempt to reform the devil himself. It will always remain a corrupt and corrupting institution, even though it should be drugged with clerical prescriptions.

On page 46, he informs the theatrical profession of what most probably they already knew, that "theirs is a peculiarly perilous life—perilous to their moral nature; but this post of moral danger may be the post of moral honour;" and then follow the circumstances which he alleges justify their occupation: such as "a strong constitutional proclivity, an early education fitting for nothing else, a powerful combination of providential circumstances, shutting up to that path, or a parental will which had shaped that course before responsibility began." There is here a plain admission that their morals are in great danger, and as these require all the safeguards we can employ, how is it possible for a conscientious man to commend or encourage such a calling, at least before he has brought it up to the standard he proposes? How can he reconcile this courting temptation, with the prayer framed by Christ, "Lead us not into temptation?" "The post of moral danger *may be* the post of moral honour." Suppose I should see some lads standing on the bank of a river, and, wondering if they could gain the opposite shore, should they strip off and plunge into its waters; I am appealed to for an opinion;—"Yes, boys, jump in, it's a very dangerous thing you are about attempting, but if you only *can* hold out until you reach the other bank you will have accomplished a great feat." Suppose in the struggle the muscles of one should weary, the mind become confused, and terror-stricken; he sinks into the bosom of the deep; how would my conscience chide me? Let the Doctor apply the illustration to himself. Suppose among the crowd whom he addressed at the Academy of Music, there happened to be one who was struggling with the better instincts of his nature, as to the propriety of adopting such a vocation, and, hearing the encouraging words of a scholar and divine, allowed these to determine the question; and suppose (what is quite probable) that resolution should end in his ruin; he may never meet him here; he may never know the effect of that unguarded sentence; but they must one day confront each other at the bar of God—and what then! But this same sentence furnishes us with another inconsistent and most dangerous doctrine. He is relating the circumstances which justify the selection of such a calling,—namely, "Constitutional proclivity;" the very same thing would justify the most flagrant crimes committed by the reckless and vicious, because their un-reproved and unrestrained habits predispose them to evil—"An early education fitting for nothing else;" the same reasoning would justify the Thug in the

practice of his murderous calling, because he has been carefully educated in its modes.—“A parental will, which had shaped that course before responsibility began;” the same reason would excuse two-thirds of our law-breaking youth, because their home education was calculated to make them lawless and disobedient.

In conclusion, it is a startling fact that there are expended upon popular amusements in the city of Philadelphia each of the six nights in the seven, for eight consecutive months, over \$5000, which would, in those months usually allotted to this purpose, make, at the least calculation, one million of dollars. And for what? The mere gratification of brute sense—literally worse than thrown away; adding not one jot to our own or others’ happiness; expended upon a set of lazy idlers, such as no community which regards the welfare of its youth should tolerate for a single day. Many of these, too, are foreign adventurers, who, with no recommendation but their beard, their throat, and their heels, are really loaded with wealth, attention, and compliment, from the moment they touch our shores, while the arrival of the Emigrant Ship, with Dennis and Pat, who, with pick-axe and spade, dig down our mountains and fill up our valleys, is considered worse than pestilence or famine! Here is an amount of money which if judiciously expended would relieve the present necessities, and gladden every destitute home in our good old commonwealth. It would support for an entire year the whole force engaged in the home missionary field. But it will be said, “Our money is our own, and we have got a right to use it as we please.” Not so, however. Men have no more right to squander their means on improper objects, than they have to abuse their bodies by improper indulgences. Who gave the intellect to contrive and mature, the muscle and the nerve to execute those plans which have been so remunerative? Who gave the bold heart and unwearied ambition, which in spite of difficulties and embarrassments, have secured opulence and ease? Who sends rain from heaven and sunshine to fill the garner of the husbandman with the fruits of the earth? Who inspires the head and the hand with cunning to build the ship, sends the wind to fill her canvass, carrying to and fro the commerce of the world, and enriching those who do business on the great deep? We cannot escape the conclusion. It is the same God who formed us, and we are just as much indebted to him for our property as our life, and shall one day be required to give a faithful account of our stewardship. The Almighty has a great plan to be accomplished, in the evangelization of the world, and this, too, by human instrumentalities. The day of miracles has gone by; the darkness of heathenism can only be reached, human we can only be alleviated, by material aid; and he only is a true subject of Christ’s kingdom who is willing to consecrate his substance to the cause of the Master. D. H. A.

NOTE.—The testimonies, authorities, &c., which have been quoted in the foregoing pages have been drawn for the most part from Plutarch, Xenophon, Prynne, Northbrooke, Cowel, Tacitus, Tertullian, de Spectaculis, Juvenal, Aristotle, Pliny, Wood’s Personal Recollections, Gosson, &c., &c.

